

Medicare law with the prescription drug benefit supposedly even comes into effect.

We should repeal the law, go back to the drawing board and come up with a prescription drug benefit that really helps senior citizens under Medicare, not this false and illusory drug card, the process which begins this week.

#### UNDOING HIDDEN TAXES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is recognized during morning hour debates.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, the only thing confusing seniors are Democrats trying to confuse seniors about their ability to prescription drugs through a discount card. I think it is unfortunate that the Democrats have chosen confusion and misleading the seniors and getting lower prescription drugs as available to them through the new strengthening and improvement of the Medicare system.

Our Members have been home talking to seniors. To answer the question how will seniors be able to choose, our Members are home helping seniors go through the system and choosing the kind of discount card and the kind of program that best benefits them, rather than trying to confuse them.

But, Mr. Speaker, I came here to talk about something a little bit different.

Mr. Speaker, every year for 1,000 different reasons, and all of them our fault, American families are squeezed by the invisible grip of hidden taxes. These are laws and regulations, all of which are well intentioned, that cost our economy billions of dollars, billions of man hours and millions of new jobs.

In addition to income taxes, customers and consumers are stuck with regulatory compliance costs, litigation costs, interest payments on the national debt, and governmental waste, fraud and abuse. And all of these are eventually passed on to unsuspecting consumers in the form of higher prices.

This week the House will take up two bills specifically targeting some of those hidden taxes. The first of these will be the Middle Class Alternative Minimum Tax Relief Act from the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS).

This legislation will protect 11 million working families and individuals from the unintended consequences of the Democrat-designed AMT, a tax provision preventing the wealthy from dodging their tax liability through creative accounting. Unfortunately, many middle income families have so benefited from Republican tax relief in 2001 and 2003, that the AMT now considers them rich.

Now, while deep down many Democrats may indeed consider a family earning \$45,000 per year to be rich, the majority of the people in this country, and thankfully in this body, have a

more realistic view of 21st century economics.

The Simmons bill is the first step towards making sure that the AMT only applies to those people it was designed to cover, not working families just trying to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Also this week, Mr. Speaker, in the House we plan to take up the conference report on one of the strongest, most disciplined budgets Congress has passed in two decades. It meets our present and reemerging needs while holding a firm line on discretionary spending. By setting a course of fiscal responsibility even in a time of war, we are giving the American people an opportunity to grow our economy back into balance, thereby protecting them from any more hidden taxes in the future.

Mr. Speaker, for generations Americans have been saddled with taxes that are too high and a government that is not responsive enough. This week we will take two small steps toward solving both of those problems.

#### LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, we teach our children that promises matter. And they do. So what kind of message does it send to our children when the President promises to leave no child behind but then breaks that promise by failing to provide our children the resources they need to get a world class education.

The fact is the President's budget cuts education funding by \$9.4 billion. That is \$9.4 billion less than the President himself said we needed to leave no child behind. So the only standard we are holding the President to is the standards he himself agreed to in his own education bill.

If that is not a broken promise, I do not know what is. Of course, \$9.4 billion is just a dollar figure. But to the children who do not and will not get the resources they need, it is much more than that; 2.4 million children will not get the help with math and reading they need; 1.3 million children will not have access to after-school activities, but will instead be sitting at home or out in the street without supervision.

Other children will be denied enrollment in Head Start because the President froze its funding. And tens of thousands of students will lose the grant work studies or loans they need to pay for college. These are the human costs of President Bush's broken promises on education.

He promised to leave no child behind, but then turns around and leaves millions of children behind. What kind of priorities are these?

We Democrats want to do what we all agreed, Democrats and Republicans

alike, is the right thing for our children: Investing the resources to raise student achievements in core subjects like reading and math; demanding results and accountability from our schools; making sure our students have up-to-date textbooks and technology; providing after-school programs for every child that needs them; ensuring access to Head Start; increasing financial aid to college students and simplifying the application process and forms; increasing the maximum Pell grant; doubling the HOPE Scholarship and making the HOPE tax credit refundable; expanding assistance to minority-serving institutions.

I know these things are really important because I began my career in public service as a high school student. I did not care for the education I received in my public school. I might have been young, but I knew that was not right. So I fought to change that. I won a seat on the school board and won the funding so that every student who would attend that school would have a quality education.

What we do here makes a difference in the lives of students. I know. The promises we make here matter in the lives of children. I know. And the level of our commitment to education will, in many ways, determine our success as a Nation in the years ahead.

I believe in opportunity, in personal responsibility. But without providing a quality education to our students, we will not have those things. And if America is going to compete in the global marketplace of the jobs and commerce and technology of the future, we need a workforce that receives the best education available, not one taught on a shoestring budget.

Today there are students learning in trailers, in outdated buildings, literally falling apart, with leaky roofs and without adequate heat, using outdated textbooks and crowded schools where teachers have to pay for supplies out of their own salaries. We can do much better than that.

America cannot and should not settle for second or third best when it comes to educating our children. To do so, we need to make the investment now. Unfortunately, President Bush and the Republicans made promises but we are failing to keep them. We Democrats want to make sure all the children in our Nation get the world class education they deserve. If you give us that chance, we will deliver that promise.

#### VALUABLE MILITARY CHAPLAINS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, there are rumors that were coming out of the Pentagon, rumors that I believe are extremely troubling. Outsourcing our military chaplains is a very bad idea.